

housing element

INTRODUCTION

The Housing Element addresses the City's desire to promote a diverse housing supply and preserve the existing housing stock by encouraging a mixture of housing types, maintaining residential neighborhood quality, and providing opportunities that will assist in the development of affordable housing for low and moderate income families.

Housing is one of the distinctive physical aspects of a community. Housing combines to form neighborhoods, and neighborhoods combine with other uses to form the community. Housing is more than just shelter; it is our living environment.

As the City's demographics change and areas such as the historic downtown begin to infill, the City will need to accommodate a wider variety of housing types, including mixed use housing, live/work units and transitional housing while maintaining the character of the existing housing stock. The City's Land Use Code will need to be flexible to allow for the variety of housing types envisioned in the future while keeping in mind the visions and goals of the other Comprehensive Plan Elements.

For a thorough study of the city's housing needs, including housing supply characteristics, demographics, employment and wages, and other housing demand factors of Issaquah, King County, and other Eastside communities, see the East King County Housing Analysis (included in the Housing Element, Volume 2).

Through A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH), the city has and can continue to address a variety of housing needs. ARCH is an inter-local program formed by the cities of the Eastside, from Kenmore, Bothell, and Woodinville south to Newcastle. ARCH staff advises the city on addressing existing and projected housing needs, and administers Issaquah's affordable housing programs. The ARCH trust fund helps create affordable housing for a low- and very low-income households and people who have special needs or are homeless. Also through ARCH, the city participates in region-wide planning efforts, including developing regional strategies to address homelessness.

HOUSING ELEMENT VISION

Preserve and enhance neighborhoods while improving housing opportunities for the City's diverse population and local workforce.

GOALS AND POLICIES

growth management act

Goal GMA-1. Encourage the availability of housing to all economic segments of the population of this state; promote a variety of residential densities and housing types; and encourage preservation of existing housing stock, while maintaining the character of the city's neighborhoods and environment.

discussion

The Growth Management Act (GMA) lists planning goals that shall "guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plan and development regulations" (RCW 36.70A.020). In addition Goal GMA-1, the Growth Management Act (GMA) requires this Housing Element to:

- GMAH – 1** Include an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs.
- GMAH – 2** Include a statement of goals, policies, objectives, and mandatory provisions for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing, including single-family residences.
- GMAH – 3** Identify sufficient land for housing, including, but not limited to government-assisted housing, housing for low-income families, manufactured housing, multifamily housing, and group homes and foster care facilities.
- GMAH – 4** Make adequate provisions for existing and projected needs for all economic segments of the community.

housing and neighborhood character

Goal A. Achieve a variety of neighborhoods, housing types, and densities throughout the City, while maintaining the character of the city’s neighborhoods and environment.

discussion

Issaquah citizens value the preservation and enhancement of their neighborhoods. The City comprises a number of distinct neighborhoods that can be differentiated on the basis of density, age of structures, size of detached homes or multifamily structures, and a variety of visible features. Issaquah’s neighborhoods, with their own unique residential characters, offer a choice of living environments, adding to the community’s ability to meet a wide variety of residential needs.

Housing diversity promotes fair housing. Fair housing is the ability for all people to choose where they live without discrimination based on race, color, national origin, sex, family status, or disability—these are the “protected classes” under state and federal law. Cities may not make zoning or land use decisions or implement policies that exclude or otherwise discriminate against protected persons, including individuals with disabilities. Issaquah’s fair housing practices are evaluated periodically by King County as part of a countywide report to the federal government. Monitoring all of the City’s housing development is important in understanding how best to achieve our housing goals. Creating a Housing Strategy Plan ensures a variety of implementation actions to be taken to ensure Issaquah is using all resources available to meet our housing goals.

Increased housing choices also help the overall housing supply better match the needs of an increasingly diverse population including low- and moderate-income families, seniors and small households. Issaquah’s zoning and development regulations are intended to allow development of housing that will satisfy varied consumer preferences. Issaquah already allows several different housing styles, such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Cottage Housing; however, as new and different styles become available, consideration should be given to how they might fit in with mixed-use and existing single family neighborhoods to provide increased housing options.

- H Policy A1** Provide for and maintain the distinct characteristics and scale of existing traditional, suburban, and mixed use neighborhoods including the Urban Villages. Ensure neighborhood compatibility of infill development and redevelopment, and encourage:
- a. Preservation of the density and building scale in older plats of the City, including but not limited to those in Olde Town, Overdale, Squak Mountain, South Cove and Sycamore;
 - b. Rehabilitation, relocation, or reuse, rather than demolition, of existing, structurally sound housing;
 - c. Private property maintenance; and
 - d. Redevelopment that is compatible with adjacent neighborhoods and provides amenities that create a sense of place for the area.
- H Policy A2** Promote a variety of housing types, and lot sizes citywide and within new planned developments, such as townhouses and row houses, smaller single-family homes on lots smaller than 6,000 square feet, and multifamily.
- H Policy A3** Encourage housing in mixed use areas that support pedestrian activity, and at densities that support transit and reduce Single Occupancy Vehicle trips.
- H Policy A4** Promote various positive attributes of mixed use housing, such as focal places, connections to or entrances facing the street, pedestrian and bike paths, access to transit, and private outdoor areas.
- H Policy A5** Consider allowing building height and lot size flexibility to achieve maximum density or other mixed use elements in exchange for community benefits.
- H Policy A6** New higher-density housing should be located within walking distance of commercial centers and transportation services and serve as transitional areas between commercial and lower density, single-family housing.
- H Policy A7** Ensure that the City’s programs, regulations, and land use practices provide equal access for people of recognized protected classes (race, color, national origin, religion, sex, family status, disability, gender identity).
- H Policy A8** Encourage energy efficiency and other sustainability and conservation measures into new and preserved housing, as well as the use of environmentally sensitive housing development practices.
- H Policy A9** Locate housing away from environmentally sensitive areas.
- H Policy A10** Support and encourage innovative and creative housing solutions to meet Issaquah’s needs for housing affordability and diversity for a variety of household sizes, incomes types and ages including but not limited to Cottage Housing, manufactured housing that meets the City’s standards, and attached units designed to fit the general character and bulk of the existing neighborhood in which the new housing is located.

- H Policy A11** Encourage the development of ADUs within new and existing single-family developments.
- H Policy A12** Encourage reinvestment in existing housing and reuse of appropriate buildings to maintain community character and preserve affordable housing opportunities.
- H Policy A13** Monitor all housing within the City, including affordable housing market, and report the effectiveness of Issaquah’s housing policies and regulations to ensure our housing goals are met.
- H Policy A14** Create a Housing Strategy Plan that identifies resources and actions to implement Issaquah’s housing goals and policies.

housing supply and affordability

Goal B. Realize livable ownership and rental opportunities throughout the City for households of all income levels.

discussion

Housing is considered affordable if it consumes no more than 30% of a household’s gross income. The affordability standards used by the City of Issaquah (and all cities in King County) for planning purposes and housing programs are as follows.

Income Level	% of Area Median Income (AMI)	Annual Income for a family of four	Maximum Housing Cost Per Month
Very Low-Income	30% or less	\$26,460	\$662
Low-Income	31% – 50%	\$44,100	\$1,103
Moderate-Income	51% – 80%	\$70,560	\$1,764

The King County Countywide Planning Policies state that all cities of King County must adopt policies, strategies, actions, and regulations that address a significant share of the countywide needs for housing affordable to very low-, low-, and moderate-income households; specifically:

- Very Low-Income: 30% AMI: County-wide Need = 12% of total housing supply
- Low-Income: 31% – 50% AMI: County-wide Need = 12% of total housing supply
- Moderate-Income: 51% – 80% AMI: County-wide Need = 16% of total housing supply

- H Policy B1** Maintain an adequate supply of appropriately zoned land to accommodate the City’s existing and projected housing needs.
- H Policy B2** Develop plans and strategies to address Issaquah’s proportionate amount of the countywide need for housing affordable to households with moderate, low, and very low incomes.

- H Policy B3** Encourage affordable housing throughout the community, and especially urban centers and other places having good pedestrian access to transit, employment, services and shopping.
- H Policy B4** Cooperate with nonprofit housing organizations and regional efforts to develop strategies for creating and preserving existing subsidized affordable housing.
- H Policy B5** Monitor the City’s affordable housing market and report the effectiveness of Issaquah’s affordable housing policies.
- H Policy B6** Consider the impacts that changes to land use or development capacity will have on the City’s overall ability to achieve balance between the number of jobs and the number of housing units in Issaquah.
- H Policy B7** Consider the effects any new regulations will have on the supply of housing and the true land capacity for housing, prior to their adoption.

Goal C. Encourage the development of affordable housing through innovative incentives and use of regulations.

- H Policy C1** Consider requiring affordable housing (or land donations or mitigation fees dedicated to affordable housing) when evaluating rezones and other changes to land use or development regulations that increase development capacity.
- H Policy C2** Offer a variety of incentives, including (but not limited to) considerations for density, parking, building dimensions, lot coverage, tax incentives and fees, to induce housing developers to provide affordable housing. Use all available local and regional funds for housing incentives.
- H Policy C3** Review construction standards and fees to determine impact on housing costs. Consider revisions that maintain environmental quality and public safety, and do not unnecessarily increase the costs of developing housing.
- H Policy C4** Consider ways to utilize transfer of development right to assist with the development and/or preservation of affordable housing through methods such as: allowing sites with affordable housing to be receiving sites in order to accommodate supporting uses such as day care, medical services or retail; or allowing sites with affordable housing to be sending sites for underutilized development capacity.
- H Policy C5** Use local, regional and national resources, including funding, to leverage other public and private funding for affordable housing.
- H Policy C6** Consider giving priority to affordable housing on surplus, public purpose City-owned land, if it is suitable for housing, with a preference for housing for low-income and very low-income households.

H Policy C7 Ensure that affordable housing achieved through public incentives or assistance remains affordable for the longest term possible.

special needs housing

Goal D. Achieve housing opportunities for residents with disabilities or other special housing needs.

discussion

Special needs housing provides shelter for victims of domestic violence, or transitional housing for homeless families, for example. Long-term housing with appropriate supportive services, such as single-family homes shared by adults with developmental disabilities, apartments, one level “no stairs” condominiums and/or multifamily housing with elevators, adapted to serve the frail elderly, or efficiency units for the mentally ill, are also needed to prevent the cycle of homelessness.

Policies in this section strive to meet the demand for special needs housing. State law provides that homes occupied by people with disabilities and group care for children that meets the definition of “familial status,” are regulated the same as similar homes occupied by a family or other unrelated individuals. In addition, the City will consider incentives, funding, technical assistance, and additional flexibility to land use regulations to provide a greater range of special needs housing. Other policies in the Regional Resources section guide to collaborate with other jurisdictions to plan and support a balance of special needs housing throughout the region.

A growing population of elderly residents means greater demand for senior housing with specialized services. It also likely means more elderly people will want to continue living in the homes they own or have known for many years; that is, “aging in place.” The city may need to consider providing or supporting new services and development standards. Universal Design refers to a broad spectrum of ideas meant to produce products, buildings, or other built environments that are useable to the greatest extent possible by everyone, regardless of their age, ability, or status in life. Wheelchair ramps, essential for people in wheelchairs but also used by all, are a common example. There are also cabinets with pull-out shelves, kitchen counters at several heights to accommodate different tasks and postures, and other accommodations.

H Policy D1 Allow small scale group homes, foster care facilities, and other special needs housing in all residential areas of the City while maintaining the character of the neighborhoods.

H Policy D2 Consider incentives to developers who volunteer to designate a portion of new housing or mixed use developments as special needs housing.

H Policy D3 Support a range of housing options and services to move homeless persons and families to long-term financial independence.

H Policy D4 Support regional efforts to prevent homelessness.

H Policy D5 Support housing options, programs, and services that allow seniors to stay in their homes or neighborhoods. Promote awareness of Universal Design improvements that increase housing accessibility.

H Policy D6 Encourage accessible housing to provide accessibility to those with disabilities.

regional resources

Goal E. Cooperate with other jurisdictions to address the region's housing needs.

discussion

Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) direct cities to work in cooperation with other jurisdictions, the private sector, and non-profit housing agencies in order to address housing issues. The City recognizes that Issaquah's housing needs are affected by regional conditions, including economic, employment, human service, and transportation factors. The goals and policies of this section of the Housing Element establish the City's commitment to work with other jurisdictions or entities to develop a coordinated, regional approach to address local and regional housing needs.

The CPPs establish job and housing targets for each jurisdiction in King County. As part of the process to update the regional job and housing targets, emphasis was placed on focusing growth in the region's Urban Centers, including Redmond's Overlake and Bellevue's Downtown. Within King County, 30 percent of the new jobs anticipated through 2030 are expected to be located on the Eastside, resulting in a significant demand for housing. Demand for housing from employment growth exceeds the planned housing growth on the Eastside. The Housing Needs Analysis indicates that in East King County, and in particular Issaquah, there is already an excess demand for housing from employment than there is housing available.

H Policy E1 Support appropriate legislation at the county, state, and federal levels that promotes the goals and policies of the Housing Element.

H Policy E2 Work with King County and other jurisdictions to establish GMA targets for jobs and housing and that seek to create a regional or sub-regional balance between housing and jobs.

H Policy E3 Cooperate with other jurisdictions, agencies, and housing providers to assess the need for and to create affordable and special needs housing.

H Policy E4 Work to increase public and private dollars available on a local and regional level for affordable and special needs housing, especially housing affordable to very low-income households.

H Policy E5 Cooperate with other jurisdictions and other providers to achieve a geographic balance in siting special needs housing throughout the region.

implementation

Goal F. Measure the effectiveness and success of the Comprehensive Plan in achieving community visions, goals and policies.

discussion

Achieving the visions of the Issaquah community for how our City should look, feel and function is dependent on implementation of the goals and policies adopted in this document.

While there are not sufficient resources to accomplish all of the implementation strategies simultaneously, the City can make progress to carry out the Comprehensive Plan by identifying priorities and necessary resources. The City has established a list of Implementation Strategies (Appendix B) that are needed to accomplish the Community vision within the Comprehensive Plan, and although not complete, the list is intended to be used as a tool for prioritizing City resources, including budget and staff time. Additionally, the City cannot accomplish all the implementation strategies alone. As part of a much larger and growing metropolitan area, issues such as growth rates, housing supply and demand, and transportation systems require cooperation and partnerships with the public and private sectors as well as local, state and federal agencies.

H Policy F1 Ensure Comprehensive Plan goals and policies are accompanied by related and required implementing actions, including but not limited to those listed in the Implementation Strategy (Appendix B).